DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 632 EA 024 671

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TITLE Deconstructing the Erected Hierarchy: Sex and Power in Organizations.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 48p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Feminism; *Organizational Climate; Organizations (Groups); *Power Structure; *Sex Stereotypes; *Sexual Harassment; Women Administrators; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Two characteristics that are commonly associated with organizational behavior, power and sex, are examined. Sexual behavior within the workplace and schools is discussed as are the effects of sexual stereotypes, sexually harassing and non-harassing sexual behavior, and office romances on the organization and its members. A conclusion is that these attitudes and practices benefit neither women nor the organization, but men. It is necessary to identify the sexual aspect of organizations and organizational behavior and develop ways to insure that a sexually safe and erotically neutral environment is maintained. Perhaps then the erected hierarchy can be deconstructed and more women will move to positions of power. (LMI)

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# DECONSTRUCTING THE ERECTED HIERARCHY: SEX AND POWER IN ORGANIZATIONS

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**Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association**

**23 April 1992**

**by**

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# DECONSTRUCTING THE ERECTED HIERARCHY: SEX AND POWER IN ORGANIZATIONS

## Introduction

Michael Korda, the pop writer on power in organizations, predicted that as more women gain real power in organizations, the politics will get tougher and the sex will be terrific.

> In principle, there is something very attractive about the idea of sex in the office, a sense in which sexuality heightens one's pleasure in one's work, a complicity of shared concerns that in itself contains a certain excitement (Korda, 1972, p. 108)

Korda, who sees power as an aphrodisiac for both women and men, has a view of sex and power in the workplace somewhat at odds with Anita Hill's experience or the experience of most women. And yet, the relationship of sex and power in the study of organizational culture and behavior warrants examination, if only because we know so little about the intersection of the two and what the consequences of each are for the women and men who work in organizations.

Thus, I intend to examine what we know about these two characteristics commonly associated with organizational behavior: power and sex. The former has been researched extensively, while the latter has had very little attention paid to it within the organization. The relationship of the two has barely been surfaced in the academic literature, and yet, both are central to

the everyday lives of organization members.

**Sex and Power**

While there are several definitions of power, it has usually been defined as having the ability to make things happen. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989), examining the many definitions of power in the literature offer this working definition: Power is "influence by one person over others, stemming from a position in an organization, from an interpersonal relationship, or from an individual characteristic." (p.51)

My interest in power is less about the particular definition and more about who has power, whatever the definition. Feminist theorists have studied women's relative lack of power in society and organizations and have pointed out that in the public sphere women hold very little power (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). An examination of the heads of the Fortune 500 companies, the percentage of female school superintendents, the roll call of the House and Senate confirm that women, although increasing the in representation among the power elite, are still meagerly represented. Power in an organization is more likely to be held by men than by women.

> The research ... suggests that for women the path for power contains many impediments and barriers and can best be characterized as an obstacle course. In contrast, the path to power for men contains few obstacles that derive from

> their gender and may actually contain sources of support unavailable to their female counterparts....women may be placed in jobs with relatively little power in comparison with those occupied by men, and these positions are maintained over time through tracking. Even when women obtain organizational assets, their value as resources for power appears to be less than that for men holding the same assets. Furthermore, these differences compound over time; at each career transition, women may be less likely than men to gain access to organizational and interpersonal resources and are less likely to benefit from having them. (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989, p.81)

One kind of power that women are believed to have is sexual power. Stereotypes cast women as temptresses who weave their sexual spells over defenseless men, men without the will to resist such potent power. Illustrative of this stereotype is the advice offered to women in Sex in the Office (Horn & Horn, 1982) about how to use sexual power to get ahead.

> Beautiful or not, many women also like being seen with important people. Dating the boss offers reflected glory, something to lord over their fellow workers, and is also a confidence builder. It helps place individuals, whatever their job, in the limelight....Sexual flings - short-term, hotly paced interludes - are another ploy in the quest for power.

> A young graduate student admits frankly that she slept with every member of her dissertation committee to make sure her doctoral thesis received a friendly reception. This buckshot approach has many adherents, but in many cases a single fling can do the trick, providing the fling is the right person, the timing is good, and the fling is played out in an atmosphere of sophistication and savvy. If the memory is still fresh and pleasant, it's hard for a boss not to see a former bed partner in a favorable light when time for a promotion or raise comes around....The next step on the power scale...is an affair....The affair is the ultimate sex-to-gain power ploy in the office...and it presents more opportunities for getting and using power. (p. 52-53)

Despite research which indicates that very few women use sexual methods for advancement (Gutek, 1989), and that those who do most often lose in the corporate or organization game, these stereotypes continue to frame the ways people think about female power in organizations. This portrayal of female power is the foundation upon which defenses of rape, child abuse, and sexual harassment are built. This notion is also used as an excuse for male fear of females.

While sex as a source of female power may be a stereotype, power as an integral component of heterosexual sex is a reality. All heterosexual sex might be said to be inherently

sado-masochistic, based as it is upon a power dynamic. Researchers in sexuality confirm Grauerholz and Serpe's (1985) findings that "Power - whether overt or subtle, violent or noncoercive - is continually exercised within sexual interactions." (p. 1055)

**Sex and Organizations**

"Sexuality is partly a question of power; power is partly a question of sexuality." (Hearn & Parkin, 1987, p. 91) Sexual transactions, some say, contain many of the same components of organizations -- use of power, hierarchy, division of labor, and rewards for productivity. Despite case history, the two have traditionally been treated by scholars as unrelated -- organizational transactions are public and sexual transactions are private sphere activities. Recently, however, theorists have begun to link the two.

While the active study of organizational sexuality has more than a decade-long history, there are only a handful of scholars who investigate these issues. Most of the research has emerged from the organizational psychological and sociological literature. Little has been done within a school context. This silence in our organizational theoretical discussions about sexuality has meaning.

An organization is neither inherently sexual nor non-sexual. There are organizations that have invested tremendous energy into

separating sex and work -- the Catholic Church is a good example. There are organizations whose business is sex -- brothels or sex therapy clinics. Except for those organizations whose business is primarily sex, the separation of sex and work occurs primarily in the church, the military and in paid work outside the home. Women who work within the home, for instance, have sex in their workplace. Sex for them is an accepted requirement of the job.

The separation of sex and work is based upon the belief that one is a private sphere and the other a public sphere activity -- although there are many exceptions, many believe to meet the needs of males. Also at the foundation is the notion that one takes away from the other. Witness the prohibition of sex for athletes before a big game. This Sampson and Delilah injunction has received the blessing of Sigmund Freud (1962) who theorized a zero sum game, at least for heterosexual men.

> Since a man does not have unlimited quantities of psychical energy at his disposal, he has to accomplish his tasks by making an expedient distribution of his libido. What he employs for cultural aims he to a great extent withdraws from women and sexual life. (p. 50)

So much for Michael Korda's predictions of great sex!

Philosophers, historians, and political scientists have identified the political in separating work and sex. Reich (1971, 1974), for instance, saw the desexualization of work as an ideological message, linking the development of political

ideologies -- especially conservatism and fascism -- with the control of sexuality within an authoritarian patriarchal family.

Feminism, on the other hand, has directly linked the political with the personal.

> In this context to connect the personal experience of sexuality and the public conditions of organisations and work is no longer obscure, or difficult, or sensationalist, but altogether rather obvious. They are related to each other because we all know and experience them as related, if we are honest. The ways we talk, walk, flirt, touch and so on, as women or as men, may all be instances of being sexual at work, and at the same time be means to displaying different sexual identities, that are at least partly work-based and organisationally-determined. (Hearn & Parkin, 1987, pgs. 13-14)

Feminist ideology, then, compells us to examine the sexuality of organizations and organizational members and to understand the role of power in the construction and maintenance of the hierarchy.

I believe that sexuality is always political, always ideological. Understanding the uses of sexuality by organizations, the meaning of silence, and who benefits from both is central to organizational analysis. Unfortunately, such analysis has been left out of organizational discourse. Not only has organizational theory been largely the theory of men -- see

for instance, the organization man (Whyte, 1956); the corporate man (Jay, 1972); and the bureaucratic man (Kohn, 1971) -- it has been a theory that has rested upon the forced heterosexuality of organizations. Until recently, organizational theory has failed to identify and understand what meaning these two functions have in the production of knowledge. It isn't as if early and important organizational studies didn't have sexual data and conclusions. The Hawthorne experiments, for instance, are largely the study of sexuality in organizations, although one would never guess that from reading their "important findings" (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Sexuality takes on many forms. Its study charts a number of threads -- not all of them integrated -- which have been driven by feminist discourse and lesbian and gay political movements. Burrell and Hearn (1989) expand the definition of sexuality for the study of organizations so that sexuality becomes "an ordinary and frequent public process" and "one aspect of an all-pervasive 'politics of the body'"(p.13).

> Thus, sexuality includes a range of practices from feelings to flirtations to sexual acts, accomplished willingly, unwillingly or forcibly by those involved. (p. 13)

Sexuality is, therefore, socially constructed. Sexuality means different things depending upon the historical era, the culture, and through whose eyes sexuality is being viewed. We decide what is sexual; in one era the display of the knee is, in another, it

is the wearing of lingerie as outerwear.

Sexual orientation and identity are also socially constructed. There is no compelling reason to identify people by their sexual practices, anymore than there is reason to categorize folks by how they brush their teeth. We could just as easily label people as sexual or not. Or merely as sexual, realizing that there are no homo or heterosexual people, only homo and heterosexual acts. Relatedly, believing that it is important to define ourselves by our sex -- male or female -- and that we are "opposite" instead of, say, "other" sexes is another socially constructed practice that plays a major role in most people's development. "Indeed the very notion that people need a clear-cut identity as a member of one sex or a particular 'sexual orientation' is itself historical and open to deconstruction" (Burrell and Hearn, 1989, p. 8)

But, the social construction of sexuality serves a purpose. It tells us who is sexual and who isn't. It also proliferates rules and practices to control the sexuality of those within society and the organization. We need to understand who benefits from this control and who is most controlled.

In understanding who is cast as sexual and who is not, the existing research uncovers a contradiction between reality and stereotype. In the stereotype, the organizational woman is a sexual provocateur while the organizational man is cool and asexual. Guteck and Dunwoody point out that central to the

female stereotypic role are being both sexual and a sex object. The male stereotypic role, on the other hand, casts "men as natural inhabitants of organizations - goal oriented, rational, analytic, competitive, assertive, strong" (1987, p. 262). The sexual stereotype of the organizational man is not sexual.

And yet, studies of male behavior indicate that men are more likely to confront the world in sexual terms (Abbey, 1982; Gottfried & Fasenfest, 1984). The more men, the more sexualized the workplace (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987) Male sexual behavior in the workplace often goes unnoticed. Gutek, for instance, reports from her data that even when a male worker unzips his pants in front of women workers, he escapes being viewed as either sexual or more interested in sex than in work.

Women, on the other hand, are cast by men as sexual. Whether or not to be seen as sexual is not a decision in the hands of the woman. Although most working women report they carefully dress and act in ways that would insure they are not seen as sexual, studies of their male colleagues indicate that the woman's intentions are ignored and that men decide through their own interpretation of female behavior what is a sexual act. Regardless of the woman's behavior or intentions, male colleagues interpret friendly, helpful behavior as sexual and attribute sexual motivation to actions described by the women as the everyday transaction of their work (Carothers & Crull, 1984; Gutek, 1985; Schneider, 1984)

On the other hand, male sexual jokes, pinups, sexual stories and come-ons are described as normal activities of organizational life and are not labelled as seductive, disruptive, power-motivated, threatening, or inappropriate. Normal organizational female behavior is labelled sexual and seen as threatening, manipulative, power-motivated, seductive, and disruptive. Women are portrayed as sexual and a problem to the organization, while being neither. Men are not portrayed as being sexual and a problem to the organization, while being both.

Studies of sexualized workplaces or erotic workplaces, indicate that the more men in the workplace, the more likely it is to be a sexual or erotic setting (Haavio-Mannila, et al., 1988). For men, the presence of men, rather than the presence of women, determines the extent to which an environment is sexualized. Thus, an all-male workplace is likely to be a highly sexualized organization. On the other hand, the least sexualized or erotic worksettings are ones with a high proportion of women and/or with women bosses. Most women report they prefer to leave sex out of the workplace (Gutek, 1985).

While sexuality is central to the male sex role, its importance goes unexamined. Men in the workplace -- particularly in non-traditional fields for women -- "see women as women first, workers second....When the work-role set is male dominated, the sexual aspects of the female sex role is emphasized in the job over other aspects of the female sex role such as nurturance or

cooperation." (Gutek & Cohen, 1987, p. 101)

A 1989 nationwide survey of men in the workplace indicates that 80% of these men say they've been attracted to a female co-worker and 50% have tried to pursue the relationship. An overwhelming majority of men reported that they had sexual fantasies about the women with whom they work. A representative response came from a 35 year old male accountant:

> It's easy to fantasize about women in the office. At my office, I have a choice. I can either look at a lot of ledger books and think about money I can never have, or I can look across the room and think about a number of women, each of whom could be a possibility. Sometimes, when I'm particularly bored, I undress them in my mind.
>
> (Glamour, January 1989, p. 125)

Women in the same survey responded differently. Eighty one percent indicated that they would not be comfortable making suggestive comments to a male boss, co-workers, or subordinate and that 59% believed that sexual innuendo undermined women's status in the office. The great majority of women were convinced that sexuality was better left at home.

**Theoretical Models of Organizational Sexuality**

But studies of sexuality in the office indicate that despite women's wishes to the contrary, sexuality is not left at home.

As mentioned earlier, the examination of sexuality in the organization does not constitute a large body of research. As Hearn and Parkin (1987) point out, it is more a search for the literature than a review of the literature. The body of knowledge includes data from early organizational studies done as part of human relations, group dynamics, and systems theory -- most of which leaves the sexual implications of the data unanalyzed -- to studies of the psychol-sexual dynamic, to sexual harassment investigations, to romance in the office inquiries. One of the most overlooked sources of discussion and data exists in the popular press. In the case of organizational sexuality, it is the popular press that provides the lead that scholars need to follow. We are left with no integrated models of a theory or theories of sexuality in organizations (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987; Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff, Burrell, 1989; Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982) This is perhaps not a bad thing.

In nearly all of the work that does exist, the unwritten assumption is that sexuality means heterosexuality. There is little in the literature -- I have only been able to find two studies -- that examines homosexuality in organizational theory. Schneider (1984) points out:

> Although it is not surprising that an assumption of heterosexuality is implicit in the myth of the office affair, it is crucial to further highlight this aspect. Heterosexuality as a cultural ideology is an implicit set of

> beliefs and requirements for behavior built into our institutional arrangements, which forcibly suggest that all sexual relationships are heterosexual and that women are dependent on men for economic survival and sexual experience. (p. 447)

One reason for the heterosexist bias is that homosexuality -- like women and gender issues -- has been a neglected corpus of research because it has not been valued. An additional explanation is that heterosexuality is more likely an outgrowth of hierarchic and paternal organizations and that heterosexual relations are the dominant form in most institutions. "Most studies of sexual harassments and sexual relationships in organizations focus on heterosexuality. Furthermore, most studies, certainly of harassment and too often of sexual relationships, point to the impact of the power of men in organizations." (Burrell & Hearn, 1989, p. 21) Finally, heterosexuality is more likely to be visible than is homosexuality because of societal bias against the latter. Therefore same-sex sexuality is less likely to be seen in the workplace than is other sex sexuality which, once you have decided to open your eyes, is everyplace. Where same sex interactions are legitimate within the organization, the issues may be the same as for heterosexuals. For instance, within same-sex institutions populated soley by homosexuals -- such as lesbian soft-ball teams -- strict rules and observances are

constructed around issues of sexuality.

**Sex at Work**

What, then, does heterosexuality look like in an organization? Researchers have identified a wide range of sexual behaviors that exist in organizations that are not overtly dedicated to sexual purposes. Visible sexuality includes overt sexual acts such as masturbation and sexual intercourse. Studies of office parties, prisons, and boarding schools all document that such acts occur. Studies of universities indicate that faculty-student sexual intercourse occurs in faculty offices and classrooms. Another visible form of sexuality is a liaison -- an affair, a sexual encounter -- between members of the organization. Sexual horseplay, joking and displays (Playboy calendars) are components of many organizations. A further visible display of organization sexuality is sexual harassment.

Not all sexual behavior in organizations is clearly identifiable as sexual. Many behaviors are sexually related but are also something else. For instance, touch and eye contact are often sexual in nature but could also be coded as just touch and eye contact. Language, such as "Hey gorgeous", "Thanks, sweetie" or "Come here sexy" are sexist and also sexual.

Rules of appearance take on sexual meaning for both men and women. For instance, the typical corporate costume for men -- the dark suit, white shirt, and power tie -- has been rated by

women as a "sexual" look. Thus, men are required to come to work in a uniform that many women find sexy. At first glance, it would seem that the opposite is true for executive women, although not for women farther down the hierarchy -- such as secretaries -- who are required to look attractive and dress to please men (Hochschild,1983). Dress for success texts and advice columns for women executives have urged them to dress carefully so that they do not expose their sexuality. These injunctions are based partly on the belief that an attractive woman is distracting to the men with whom she works as an equal, partly upon the belief that it is a woman's job to curb her attractiveness so as not to get herself into trouble, and partly on the notion that for a woman to be powerful, she must distance herself from being thought of as female. Thus, in this framework, women are required to come to work in a uniform that downplays female sexuality, attractiveness and identification. Another analysis of the dress-for-success rules for women focuses on the homoerotic aspects of women dressing like men. In this analysis, heterosexual males are free to let their homoerotic fantasies proliferate without fear that they are, indeed, homosexual. In either case, the decision about what women should wear and what sexual meaning it has is not being made by women, but rather by men, for men.

The language of organizations is also sexual.

The sexuality of language includes formal organisational

> references to "policy thrusts", "promotion drives," "market penetration," and all manner of "special projects" and "projections". Words like "tools", "equipment" and "instruments" can refer to the necessary materials for undertaking a piece of work and can have attached additional sexual meanings. (Hearn & Parkin, 1987,p. 147

Revenge or beating a colleague at her or his own game is called fucking someone over or screwing them. Advancing up the organizational ladder is referred to as getting ahead. Positive executive descriptors include: driving, penetrating, and masterful. Everyday sexist language -- such as chairman, manpower, workmanship, and statesman -- is also sexually harassing language.

**Sex in Schools**

Even if they might agree that these sexual dimensions exist in organizations, most people would assume that they don't exist in schools. However, I will argue, based upon mine and others' data, that sexuality within schools exists and is tolerated, if not encouraged.

Studies of peer sexual harassment -- both contactful and non-contactful -- indicate that in schools this behavior is usually coded by school staff as the normal interactions of children and teenagers. School staff allow boys to rate girls on their anatomy and to call girls bitches and cunts. These same

educators use female identified words to insult both males and females. Words such as pussy, pussywhipped, pansy, and sissy are all aimed at humiliating another person by calling him or her (usually a him) a female. This male homophobic language has its roots in equating a male homosexual with a female. This language humiliates females as well, since girls learn that being labelled a female is the worst thing one can be accused of being.

This hostile sexualized climate is one that at its worst encourages or at its best permits physical and sexual abuse of females by both male students and male staff. For instance, in a study of sexual harassment by peers, Bogart and Stein (1987/1989) found:

> young women are much more likely to be victims of sexual harassment than their male counterparts, especially in the more severe forms of unwanted sexual attention, including acquaintance rape and gang rape; that student to student sexual harassment is more prevalent than teacher to student sexual harassment; that peer to peer sexual harassment, including cases in which the harasser is both known to or identifiable to the victim or not known, ranged from verbal and written comments to physical assault to attempted rape. (p. 152)

Representative of the kinds of physical abuse reported by Bogart and Stein were:

> A young woman who had been cheerleader at our school

received threatening notes and phone calls with sexual innuendoes, in school and at home. After football season was over, this young woman was told, after track practice one day, that her mother had gotten into an accident right near the school. The young woman, tricked into believing it was true, ran outside and was knocked out and assaulted, but not raped. The female student suffered terrible fear after the situation and missed a lot of school due to both physical and emotional reactions to this incident. (152-53)

Peers aren't the only people who sexually abuse and harass female students. A study of allegations of sexual abuse of students by faculty and staff in 184 school districts in New York found that of the 300 reported incidents in elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools, 97% of the faculty/staff abusers were self identified hetereosexual males and 74% of the victims were female students. (Shakehshaft & Cohan, 1990)

When a sexist word is scrawled across a locker or when a male student or teacher uses sexist language, the silence can be deafening. Few teachers even code such behavior as a problem, and many of the sexual insults and put-downs of girls come from teachers and administrators themselves.

Male socialization has contributed to behavior that creates a sexual organizational climate not welcoming to women. In a study of the day-to-day experiences of female school administrators, I found that sexual jokes, references to female

anatomy or appearance, and sexual innuendo are behaviors that women say make them uncomfortable and create a climate that is experienced by women as hostile. They are also experiences that women administrators frequently encounter. (Shakeshaft, unpublished data)

A not uncommon example of ways in which male administrators allowed male teachers to create a hostile environment, using sexuality as a tool, can be found in the following example from a school district on Long Island:

> the male teachers pasted a nude centerfold over a poster announcing Women's History Week. The message was not only that Women's History Week is unimportant, but also that it is acceptable and humorous to equate Women's History Week with the viewing of women as sex objects. [When women teachers complained to the administration they] were told that they lacked a sense of humor if they didn't laugh. (Shakeshaft, 1986, p. 502)

This is just one of the many ways women report that a hostile environment is created, using sexuality to make women uncomfortable.

A final example was observed by me in an assistant superintendent's office in a large California school district. This male assistant superintendent sat behind a rather imposing wooden desk that was topped by glass. Underneath the glass and in full view of anyone who was meeting with the assistant

superintendent were sexual cartoons cut out of magazines such as Penthouse and Playboy. It was impossible to look at the assistant superintendent without also looking at these sexual cartoons which displayed nude women with large breasts, small waists, and provocative asses.

Thus, even in schools we have evidence of the existence and the approval of sexual behavior.

**Types of Organizational Sexuality**

These cases illustrate the evidence of sexuality in organizations, but they are not inclusive of all forms. Although no model of sexuality in organizations has yet been developed, Gutek and Dunwoody (1987) include both harassing and non-harassing sexual behavior in their study of sex at work, arguing that from a psychological or sociological view (as opposed to a legal perspective) "there is less justification for distinguishing sexual harassment from the study of other kinds of sexual behavior at work." (p. 250) Although technically classified under non-harassing sexual behavior, I am going to discuss office romances in a separate category since they take on dimensions that neither harassing nor non-harassing behavior do. In examining each of these categories, I will define and document the existence of these behaviors and discuss the impact on the individuals and the organization, particularly in light of who benefits.

**Harassing Sexual Behavior**

The history of the study of sexual harassment began in the mid to late 1970s and was prompted by two important events: the naming of the behavior as sexual harassment (Farley, 1978) and the classification of sexual harrassment as a form of sex discrimination (MacKinnon, 1979). While studies of sexual harassment have investigated most workplaces, only recently has attention been turned to K-12 settings (Shakeshaft, 1992; Shakeshaft, Cohan, Greenberg, in press; Stein, 1991)

A common definition of sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention. Unwanted is the key word here, and harassment is in the eye of the harassed. Studies indicate that a number of factors determine whether or not a behavior will be labelled harassing. Gutek and Dunwoody (1987) in a review of literature on the definitions of sexual harassment indicate that the following variables make a difference: "(1) the behavior in question, (2)the relationship between harasser and victim, (3) the sex of the harasser, (4) the sex and age of the victim, (5) the sex of the rater, and (6) the occupation of the person doing the rating." (p.253)

According to Gutek and Dunwoody (1987) sexual behavior which involves threats is more likely to be labelled harassing than is behavior that is less threatening. Touch is more likely than comments, looks, or gestures to be rated as harassing. When the harasser is a supervisor it is more likely to be taken seriously

but less so if the victim has dated the harasser. It is most likely to be labeled harassment when the man is the aggressor, the woman the victim, and the victim is young and female.

Women and men rate different behaviors as harassing, with women identifying a much wider range of behaviors than men would so class. Men tend to classify only extreme behaviors as harassing. Finally, higher level managers identify harassment less than middle or lower level managers and faculty less often than students.

The frequency of sexual harassment in organizations has been documented by a number of researchers. Gutek (1985) reports that 53% of women have been sexually harassed at least once in their life. Studies indicate that those most vulnerable are young, unmarried or minority women and that women are harassed by men, not women. Those in non-traditional jobs are more likely than those in traditional jobs to be harassed. Studies of sexual harassment of males indicate that perhaps 9% of males have experienced sexual harassment, although analysis of this data indicates that "few of the reported incidents were sexual harassment as it is legally defined, and some of the incidents may not have even been considered sexual if the same behavior had been initiated by a man or by another woman who was considered a less desirable sexual partner by the man" (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987, p.255)

Studies of harassment in schools document that peer

harassment of females is almost certain by the time a female is a senior and that sexual harassment of students by teachers is not uncommon (Shakeshaft, 1992; Shakeshaft, Cohan, & Greenberg, in press; Stein, 1991)

In interviews with women administrators, most can report at least one incident of unwanted sexual advancement by male colleagues and board members (Shakeshaft, unpublished data). These women describe having to be careful how they present themselves -- both physically and verbally -- in order to make sure that unwanted sexual advances by men don't occur. And when they do occur, the women report that they are frightened for their jobs and their physical safety. Thus, the school world for women employees is one that has elements of sexual fear and threat -- in other words, a world that is unsafe and hostile.

**Non-harassing Sexual Behavior**

While the majority of research on social-sexual behavior has focused on sexual harassment, scholars have recently begun to extend their explorations to include behavior that is sexual but not harassing. Non-harassing sexual behavior is social-sexual behavior that is not considered harassing by the receiver. "These phenomena can range from requests for dates and sexual comments that are perceived as flattering through mildly offensive comments or gestures to physical contact that is unwanted and uncomfortable but not so uncomfortable as to be

labeled harassment." (Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990, p. 573)

Gutek, Cohen and Konrad (1990) point out that non harassing sexual behavior in the workplace is more widespread than other forms, with 76.2% of the men and 77.6% of the women in their sample reporting having experienced it. They further established that the more men there are in the workplace or the more contact men have with women in the work environment, the more sexualized the work environment. The more sexualized the work environment, the more the probability of both harassing and non-harassing sexual behavior. Haavio-Mannila, et al. (1988) also report that a sexualized workplace environment increases the likelihood of both harassing and non-harassing sexual behavior (p. 134-5)

My studies of women administrators (Shakeshaft, unpublished data) confirm that the more contact women school administrators have with men, the more likely they are to experience both non-harassing and harassing sexual behavior.

**Office Romance**

Although technically a form of non-harassing sexual behavior, I have chosen to deal with office romances separately, since they constitute a growing body of research and are the focus of the few formal policies on sexual behavior that exist in organizations.

The study of office romances is mostly documented in the popular press, including Cosmopolitan, Newsweek, New York,

Working Women, Redbook, Glamour, Men's Health and Personnel magazines. However, a few researchers (Maniero, 1989; Quinn, 1977) have begun to document this behavior and explore the implications for individuals and organizations.

Studies of office romances indicate that they are most often entered into for innocent and seemingly honorable reasons -- love. A 1988 Newsweek Gallop Poll for instance found that 21% of respondents had engaged in an intimate relationship with someone in the same company (Kantrowitz, 1988, p.52). A survey of 444 readers of Men's Health (1987, Fall) magazine found that a quarter had had sex at work and 18% had sex with a co-worker during work hours.

In the Haavio-Mannila, et al. study (1988), workplace romances were found to be related to the erotic atmosphere of the work setting. In this research, Haavio-Mannila, et al. (1988) categorized the workplace in the following ways: erotically neutral to erotically excited. The more men in the workplace, the more likely the workplace was to be an erotically excited organization. Women were much more likely to work in erotically neutral settings. In the erotically excited organization, 33% of the men and 50% of the women reported having had a workplace romance while only 12% of men and 15% of women reported a romance in an erotically neutral setting (p. 134). Schneider's (1984) study of lesbian and heterosexual women's sexual involvement with co-workers found that 28% of the single, heterosexual women and

22% of the lesbians met their current partner at work. About half (52%) of the lesbians and 22% of the heterosexual women reported having had at least one relationship with someone at work in their lifetime (p. 450).

A study of romances by teachers and administrators in schools (Shakeshaft, unpublished data) indicates that they are alive, well, and flourishing within the K-12 environment.

**Impact of Sexual Behavior**

The research on the impact of sexual behavior on individuals and the organization has begun to be documented. Most of the research has been directed at identifying the negative aspects of sexual behavior although some points to its positive aspects.

**Sexual Stereotypes:** In examing the impact of sexual behavior on organizations, I want to look first at the impact of maintaining the stereotype that females in organizations are sexual and males are not. In the study I will report, it is clear that maintaining this misinformation serves the interests of males, not the interests of either females or good schooling.

In a study of the hiring practices of male superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1987), we asked these superintendents if they would hire an attractive female. Almost all of the superintendents in our study said, "Sure, I'd hire an attractive woman." When we asked for what job, almost all had her slotted for an elementary principalship. When we followed up and asked if these

superintendents would hire this imaginary woman as an assistant superintendent, in a role that worked very closely with the superintendent, very few of the superintendents said they would.

The issue for them was the combination of the intensity of the working relationship and the attractiveness of the woman. Most admitted that they felt uncomfortable in a close working relationship with an attractive woman.

Some, however, not only did not feel uncomfortable, but said they had, indeed, hired a woman to work closely with them, usually as assistant superintendent. Therefore, we interviewed both groups of superintendents about their beliefs or experiences with hiring women in an attempt to get an understanding of some of the issues that might surface when men think about working closely with women.

The first reason superintendents gave for not hiring a woman to work closely with them was their concern that school board members would see something unseemly in the relationship and that this perception would threaten the superintendents' effectiveness with their boards. We interviewed those superintendents who had hired a woman and asked them if they had received negative feedback from board members. While a few reported suggestive comments or sexual jokes from board members, they all said that they in no way felt that working with a woman had hurt their reputations or threatened their effectiveness in the eyes of the board.

The second reason the superintendents gave for not hiring attractive women was their worry that it would cause marital friction and few wanted the additional stress of "trouble on the home front" added to their already stressful lives. Interviews with those superintendents who had hired women indicated they didn't find this a problem. None of these superintendents reported the jealousy or friction that their colleagues anticipated. However, the fear of jealousy wasn't confined to superintendents who didn't hire women. The women assistant superintendents worried about the possibility and reported that they made a special effort to build a relationship with the wife of their "boss". In an attempt to "avoid problems", these women assistant superintendents described ways in which they tried to insure that the wives of the men to whom they reported would not worry about romantic relationships between their husbands and the women assistant superintendents.

The third reason that the superintendents gave for not hiring a woman with whom to work closely is that most of the male superintendents said they wouldn't feel comfortable working closely with an attractive woman because these men weren't sure they wouldn't be sexually attracted to her. And if they were, it seemed to them like a no-win situation. If the superintendent were attracted to his female subordinate and she didn't return the feelings, the superintendent felt he ran the risk of being charged with sexual harassment. On the other hand, if she were

similarly attracted, the superintendent's first two fears (school board disapproval and marital discord) might become reality. Thus, fear of their own lack of sexual control led these superintendents to a position that it was better not to work closely with women. The superintendents who had hired women didn't deny that they might become sexually attracted to the women with whom they worked, but what set them apart from their colleagues who would not hire a woman was that these superintendents didn't believe that feeling attracted to a woman meant they had to act on it. In other words, they didn't equate attraction with action.

Thus, in this study, most male superintendents did not want to work closely with women because they saw women as a threat. Because of the superintendents' gender expectations that women are for sex and that women, thus, constitute a sexual danger to the superintendents, most men in our study said they would not hire a woman. This example demonstrates the impact of maintaining the stereotype that women are sexual magnets and men are helpless victims.

**Sexually Harassing Behavior:** Sexual harassment has been seen by many as a way for men to use sex and power to control the actions and behaviors of females. If this is indeed its purpose, it has been quite successful. Dozens of studies indicate that sexually harassing behavior has interupted the careers of women, has caused them to quit or lose their jobs, and has resulted in a

curtailment of upward mobility, either by choice or through force.

Sexual harassment or the fear of harassment has resulted in "lower productivity by women, less job satisfaction, reduced self-confidence, and a loss of motivation and commitment to their work and their employer" (Gutek, 1985; Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987, p.257). These women avoid working with men, even though it is important to their jobs and careers to do so. They are likely to exhibit self blame and work under a great deal of stress. Sexually harassed women report more physical and emotional illness than those not harassed and a disruption in their marriages or other personal relationships with men (Dunwoody-Miller & Gutek, 1985; Gutek, 1985; Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982) For instance, Tangri, Burt & Johnson (1982) found that 33% of sexually harassed women reported that their physical and emotional health deteriorated and 15% of the women in Gutek's (1985) study reported dysfunction in their relationships with men because of the harassment.

Sexual harassment affects organizations as well. In addition to the obvious loss of talent, the threats to a smooth functioning team, and the increase of stress in its workers, sexual harassment costs the organization money in lost time, medical benefits, and legal expenses. For instance, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1981) found that in a two year period, sexual harassement of federal employees cost the

government at least 189 million dollars.

While 10% of women report having quit their jobs because of sexual harassment, fewer than 1% of men report the same experience (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987) "Not one man said he lost a job as a consequence of a sexual overture or request from a woman at work" (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987, p. 258)

Thus, the impact of sexual harassment is negative to the individual who is harassed, who is almost always female, and the organization in which she or he works. The only person who gains in this situation is the harasser, who is almost always male.

**Non-harassing Sexual Behavior:** Non-harassing behavior also has negative consequence for those who are harassed. Although they are often not consciously aware of the damage, women who work in non-harassing sexualized environments have lower job satisfaction. Gutek (1985) reports this lower job satisfaction across all kinds of behaviors, including remarks intended to be complimentary.

While most women studied say they are offended or insulted by sexual remarks or sexual overtures by men at work, the majority of men (67%) say they are flattered. While women do not view sexual bantering or activity as appropriate in the workplace, many men do (Gutek, Morasch & Cohen, 1983). Thus, while men report a great deal of sexual behavior at work, they report experiencing few work-related negative consequences (Gutek & Dunwoody, 1987). When they do report consequences, men tend to

see them as positive and enjoyable, noting that sexuality at work makes work more fun, that they like the attentions of women, and that it boosts their egos and makes them feel good about themselves. Women seldom respond in this manner.

Thus, non-harassing sexual behavior costs the organization in lost time and lowered productivity, it hurts women through increased stress and lowered job satisfaction, and it benefits men because it makes them feel better about themselves and adds a "spark" into an otherwise dull day. As one man said, "It gives me a lift."

**Office Romances:** While an office romance may be enjoyable for the two people involved, it most often has negative consequences for the organization and, in the long run, for the woman's career. Schneider (1984) studied lesbian and heterosexual women's office romances and found that although the relationships tended to be quite different, many of the effects were the same. Lesbian romances were more egalitarian and with co-workers; heterosexual women were more likely to have a romantic relationship with someone up the hierarchy. Lesbians also maintained a friendship with the former lover after the romance ended; heterosexual women did not maintain a connection with the men with whom they had been involved. Both groups of women reported increased trouble with coworkers and 20% of the lesbians reported increased problems with their boss because of the affair. While very few of either group believed that the

affair improved their chances of promotion, 8% of the lesbians believed it hurt their chances. The ending of the romances resulted in several problems across the groups including (1) hostility or sadness that made work relationships difficult and (2) resigning or being fired. Not one lesbian or heterosexual woman reported benefitting from the relationship.

If, as some people believe, the best way to move up an organization is to gain the trust of those who have power, it would seem that the careers of women who have romantic, love relationships with someone of higher status would benefit. Because one of the few ways men build intimacy and trust with women is through sex, it would seem that an office romance is akin to a weekly golf game. However, it appears that the organizational pressure and suspician around the relationship is stronger than the opportunity to build trust. For most women, then, an office romance is not a career boost.

Women are more likely to suffer negative career consequences when the relationship is with someone up the hierarchy (Maniero, 1989). However, most research indicates that the organization is hurt no matter what the nature of the relationship. Office romances generate anger, excitement, and resentment. They become a source of discussion and speculation and workers spend time interpreting, analyzing, and talking about the behavior of the lovers rather than being productive at the tasks for which they were hired.

Not everyone believes that office romances are bad, however. Men report they make work more fun and they see no possible negative consequences from them (Eyler & Baridon, 1991). Since it is usually the woman, not the man, whose career is affected by an organizational romance, these men aren't often wrong. Maniero (1989) posits that it is the most powerful, not the male, who is the safest. She believes it because males are more often in positions of power in organizations that makes them safe, not because they are male.

If the couple marries, the organization is more likely to see the union as a positive, rather than negative, relationship. Companies have found that when two jobs are on the line, the couple is more likely to be dedicated to the job and more likely to be controlled. Accounts of marriages of high level executives indicate that organizations believe it in the organization's best interest to keep both members of the couple.

**Who Uses Sex at Work? Who Benefits?**

Studies indicate that very few women use sex to get ahead and, even if they did, it wouldn't work. Gutek (1989), for instance, reports:

> My surveys found relatively little evidence that women routinely or even occasionally use their sexuality to try to gain some organizational goal. There is even less support for the position that women have succeeded or advanced at

work by using their sexuality. Only one woman out of over 800 said she used sex to help her achieve her current position, and she said she was "thankful" that she did not have to do that any more. In comparison, many women reported they were fired or quit after they got involved with a man at work. Of those men who reported that women made overtures towards them,...all said they did not give the woman a better or easier job and several men said they fired those women. (p.63)

Men, on the other hand, use sex at work regularly. Some men in Gutek's studies say they dress in a seductive manner at work, and more men say they offer organizational rewards to women in exchange for sex. Other men use sex in a hostile manner to control women and intimidate them. Many men sexualize the workplace, telling sexual jokes, making sexual comments, heightening the sexual atmosphere. Men, then, use sexuality as a regular part of their work life.

Who, then, benefits from the sexualization of the workplace? The evidence suggests that the organization seldom benefits since a sexualized workplace engages workers in activities other than what they are paid for. Additionally, this environment makes women uncomfortable and results in lowered productivity, stress, and decreased job satisfaction. The sexualized environment seldom helps a woman move in her career and usually short-circuits it. Thus, neither the organization nor the woman

in the organization benefits.

However, individual men do benefit, even those who are not directly involved in sexualizing the environment. Men report that a sexualized environment adds spark, makes them feel good about themselves, gives them a lift, and has no negative career risks. Add to that eliminating the female competition and controlling female behavior, and the benefits to men are obvious.

We don't know, however, what role power plays in this configuration. If women were more powerful and men less so in organizations, would men be the ones who felt the negative consequences? If stereotypes of sexuality were different and men were seen as temptresses and the holders of secret sexual power, would their careers be derailed by a sexualized environment? Would they be afraid to go to work, would they watch their every word, and dress with great care? Would women wear power suits and men hide their sexuality? We don't know. But even if the situation were reversed, and men were at risk, the role of sexuality in the organization would still be negative -- even if briefly satisfying for women who, for too long, have suffered from its oppressive presence. Thus, there is every reason for us to identify the sexual aspects of organizations and organizational behavior and develop ways to insure that a sexually safe and erotically neutral organization is maintained. Perhaps then, we can begin to deconstruct the erected hierarchy and move more women into positions of power.

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p1While administrators often joke about sex, they seldom examinehow their attitudes and beliefs about their own sexuality guidetheir administrative behavior. While both males and femalesare uncomfortable with sexual issues, male discomfort

serves asa larger impediment to effective administration than doesfemale discomfort for three reasons: 1. there are more maleadministrators at every level in schools than there are femaleadministrators; 2. females have had to learn to understand awhite male world to succeed in it, and therefore, are morelikely to have already dealt with issues of sexuality; and 3.women and men have been socialized differently around theissues of sexuality, and female socialization is less likely tobe the kind that impairs effective administrative functioningthan is male socialization.

Sexual issues shape many management strategies. For instance,hiring practices, organizational climate and team building areall affected by fears, discomfort or displays of sexuality. The following briefly examines how sexuality -- and inparticular heterosexuality -- interacts with some typicalmanagement behaviors and, more specifically, how malediscomfort with the sexual self impedes effective management.Throughout the analysis of the role sexuality plays inmanagement issues is the
issue of gender. Without rigid gender roles, sexuality issueswould not be so potent. It is because of the genderexpectation of a woman's sexual purpose that sexuality becomesan issue.

^Hiring Practices: ^ An example of how beliefs about sexualityaffect administrative behavior can be found in an

examinationof who male administrators hire and why.

^Team Building:^ The sexual issues discussed in hiring practicesare also found in the creation of work groups. Even if a womanis hired into a position, male discomfort with his ownsexuality may cause him to not include her in a team situation. From the woman's perspective, the issue of sexuality is also aproblem. Women administrators report being cautious andsuspicious of attention from male superordinates, unclear aboutwhat the underlying message is. Whether or not there is aspoken or unspoken sexual message, women process thepossibility and think about their responses and actions inlight of that possibility. Administrative action isinfluenced by gender expectations based upon the stereotypethat when men and women are together the outcome is sexual.

Again, this isn't surprising. Sex integration rarely occurs inAmerican school systems. Starting in about the second grade,boys and girls move apart and segregate themselves along sexlines (Best, 1983). Little is done to change this pattern ofsex isolation, and observations of classrooms and playgroundsfind ample evidence of boys against girls spelling bees orathletic contests.

When males and females do come together again during lateadolescence, it is for sexual or romantic reasons. Men andwomen have very little training or practice in working togetheras people, rather than as representatives of another sex.

It'snot surprising, then, that sexuality (and particularlyheterosexuality) gets in the way of easy working relationshipsbetween women and men. These patterns in the absence of acurriculum that helps students explore their own sexualityinsure that when these students become adults, they, too, willhave difficulty working with members of the other sex. This ishow a curriculum that does not include sexuality is a threat toa well functioning workforce.

This issue of sexuality comes first to our attention because ithelps to explain some of the reasons why men are reluctant tohire women into jobs which will cause them to work closelytogether. However, further exploration of sexuality highlightsthe importance of the cultural meanings we give to peoplebecause of their sex and the implications these meanings havefor administrative behavior. We need to understand how theissue of sexuality overlays the behavior of men and women inorganizations and explore how it both helps and hurts theplayers involved. We need to understand also that this is agender issue. It is our gender expectations that makesexuality a barrier to effective management, rather than just anormal part of every day life.